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# Jamaica Plain

District Profile &  
Proposed 1978-1980  
Neighborhood  
Improvement  
Program

City of Boston  
Kevin H White, Mayor  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Neighborhood Planning Program

Summer, 1977

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CITY OF BOSTON  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY HALL, BOSTON

KEVIN H WHITE  
MAYOR

The Boston Redevelopment Authority's Neighborhood Planning Program has prepared this report to assist residents and City agencies develop longer range solutions to community-wide planning issues.

This "Neighborhood Profile" contains information which helps bring into sharp focus those matters which are of concern to residents of each neighborhood in the City. This information facilitates public understanding and assists all of us--both at City Hall and in the neighborhood--in determining how we can best use the resources available to us.

I hope this booklet serves as an important building block to encourage greater interest in the problems confronting this neighborhood and our City and help us all in developing solutions to these problems.

A handwritten signature of Kevin H. White.

Kevin H. White  
Mayor

# Boston Redevelopment Authority

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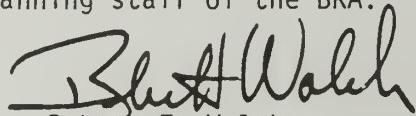
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The Boston Redevelopment Authority, as the City planning agency, is pleased to submit for neighborhood review a profile of Jamaica Plain.

It is my hope that the profile can serve as a starting point in the dialogue that should and must take place between neighborhood residents and public officials as decisions are made about the use of community development funds and other matters of public policy.

The decision-making process, of course, must be based on data that is up-to-date and accurate. I am confident that the material contained in this report can be of great assistance to all who care about this neighborhood in particular and the city as a whole.

Questions and comments about the material in the report should be directed to the Neighborhood Planning staff of the BRA.



Robert F. Walsh  
Director  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

This planning report, prepared by the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials in defining the needs of, and programs for the Jamaica Plain area. It is also written to provide prospective residents and investors with an analysis of current issues facing the community; the report does not describe the many positive attributes of the neighborhood.

The report includes background information, a discussion of major community planning and development issues and recommended strategies and is intended to aid in the establishment of a long range framework for decision making by the public and private sectors.



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# **1.** BACKGROUND

## A. NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Historically, Jamaica Plain has never been a clearly defined area. It was originally part of the town of Roxbury and when West Roxbury was declared a separate community in 1851 no distinct boundary existed between Jamaica Plain and other portions of West Roxbury.

In the 17th century, West Roxbury was sparsely settled and was an area of fertile farmland which supplied much of Boston's fruit and produce. The earliest streets determined the first settlements and still define neighborhoods today in Jamaica Plain.

Two major factors influenced the early development of Jamaica Plain: a new water supply and transit extensions. In 1795, the Jamaica Plain Aqueduct Company was formed. Its water system, which extended from Jamaica Pond to Fort Hill, was a major source of water supply to Boston until 1845. This water supply attracted industry to Jamaica Plain and tanneries and breweries grew up in the band from Roxbury Crossing to Forest Hills. In 1834, the Boston and Providence railroad was constructed along Washington Street. The railroad brought commuters to Jamaica Plain and the area was no longer to be a community of farmers and wealthy residents. The new commuters built Greek Revival, Italianate and Mansard style houses, many of which still remain.

The last half of the 19th century brought many physical changes to Jamaica Plain. In the 1870's the street car tracks were extended from Roxbury into West Roxbury along Washington Street and Centre Street. This improved access was a stimulant to construction of middle class residential areas throughout Jamaica Plain. Most of the old estates were subdivided and cross roads were built. The area which was most intensively developed at this time was central Jamaica Plain bounded by Centre Street, Green Street and the railroad. Most of the houses built were single or two-family, detached wooden structures, although three deckers were constructed near the borders of Roxbury and the manufacturing district.

Despite its growth as a residential area, Jamaica Plain retained much of the open space for which it is still famous. This is mainly due to the creation of Boston's "emerald necklace" park system, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in the late 1800's to provide the City with a continuous chain of parklands.

## B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

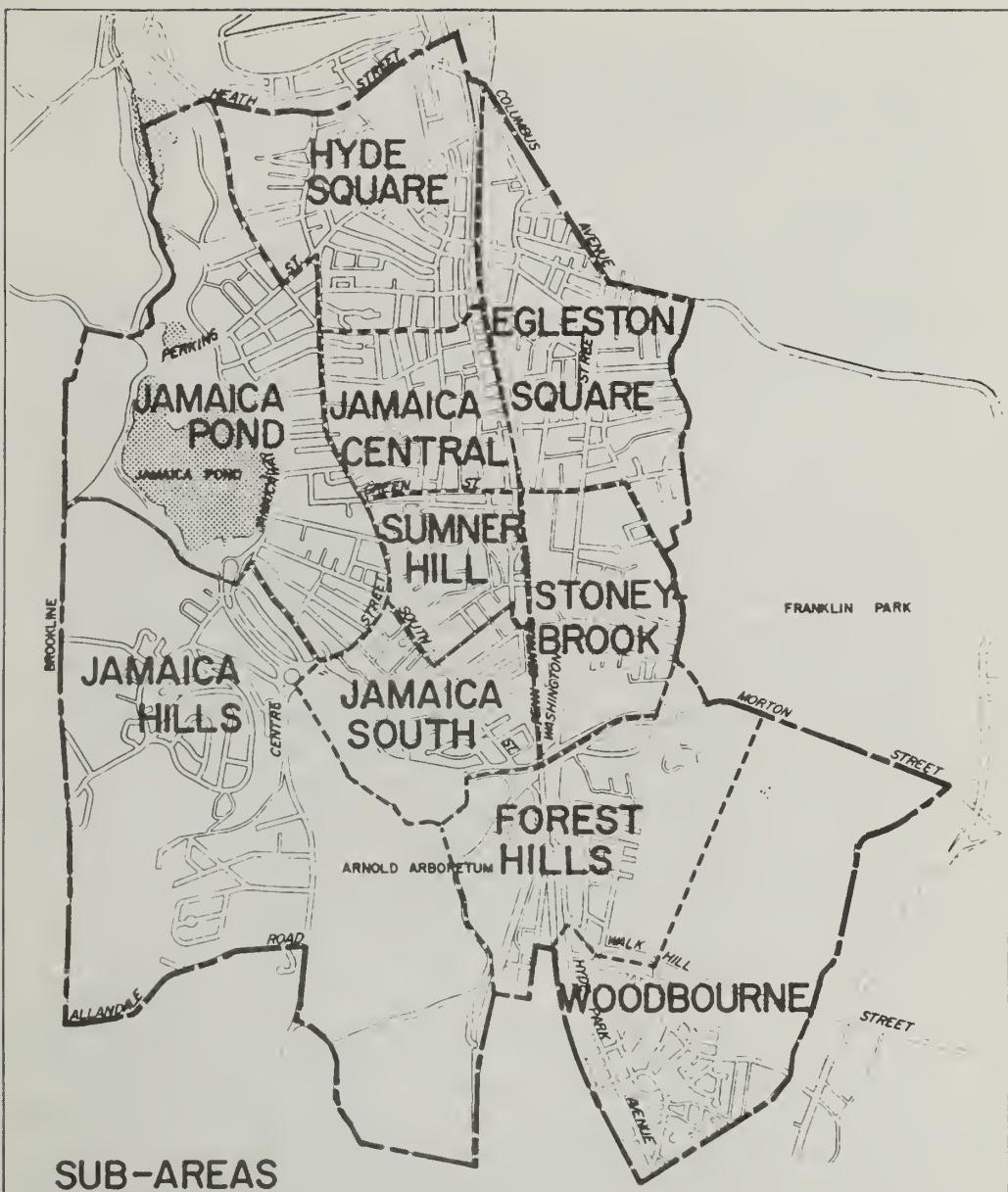
Information on population, income and housing in this report is derived from the 1960 and 1970 U.S. Census. The 1970 data for Jamaica Plain is available on a sub-area basis, and for purposes of analysis, ten sub-areas have been designated as shown on the sub-areas map. These sub-areas conform in general to local neighborhood association boundaries, but vary in some instances to conform to Census boundaries for purposes of data analysis. The 1960 Census data is not available for the designated sub-areas and comparisons between 1960 and 1970 are shown only for the district as a whole.

After reaching its peak of population in 1950, Jamaica Plain (as well as the City as a whole) continued to lose population. From 1960-1970, Jamaica Plain lost 12.4% of its population (a rate 50% higher than that of the City). This overall decline in population was accompanied by an increase in the minority population. From 1960-1970, Jamaica Plain experienced a 216% increase in its Black population, a rate more than three times the increase in the City overall; Jamaica Plain's Hispanic population also increased significantly, again at a rate greater than that for the entire City. From 1960-1970, Jamaica Plain's elderly (65 and over) population increased 3% while the City experienced a decline of 5%.

From 1970-1976, both Jamaica Plain and the City experienced a slight decrease in total population. However, Jamaica Plain's Black and elderly population increased slightly and the Hispanic population continued its significant increase. Projections for the future show an expected increase in the overall, Black and Hispanic population and a decrease in the number of school age children.

### 1. Egleston Square

The Egleston Square neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 7,100 people, but also contains the major portion of Jamaica Plain's industrial area. Egleston Square is a racially mixed neighborhood; in 1970 the population was 70% White, 15% Black and 15% Hispanic. Since then both the Black and Hispanic populations have increased (the Hispanic population at the greatest rate). The neighborhood's housing stock is comprised mainly of two and three family frame dwellings, with various other housing types (mainly single family) interspersed throughout. Nearly two thirds of the housing stock is owner-occupied but Egleston Square also has the second highest abandonment and vacancy rate in Jamaica Plain. Under the federally funded Community Improvement Program (CIP) in the late 1960's, many residential units in Egleston Square were rehabilitated and needed street improvements completed. Recently, the 312 program was made available in the portion of the neighborhood which was not eligible in the past. Egleston Square has a small business district along Washington Street which services local residents' needs. Neighborhood concerns focus on housing



problems, industrial blight, impact of the proposed Orange Line Stations and reuse of the vacant land in the Southwest Corridor.

## 2. Forest Hills

The Forest Hills neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 2,300 people; in 1970 the population was 98% White and 2% Hispanic. The housing stock is comprised mainly of two and three family frame dwellings with about 20% of the stock in single family structures. Forest Hills has a small business district along Washington Street and Hyde Park Avenue to service local residents' needs. Neighborhood concerns focus

on traffic problems, public works improvements, housing problems, Hatoff's gas station, the reuse of Southwest Corridor parcels and the impact of the proposed new Forest Hills Station and 500 car parking garage.

### 3. Hyde Square

The Hyde Square neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 10,600 people. In 1970, the population was 58% White, 29% Black and 13% Hispanic; however, over 90% of the neighborhood's Black population is in the Bromley-Heath housing project and the Spanish population was significantly undercounted. The housing stock (with the exception of Bromley-Heath) is mainly two and three family frame dwellings with about 10% of the stock in single family homes. The area is experiencing a continuing influx of Hispanic residents who also comprise the majority of replacement buyers in the neighborhood. Hyde Square has serious housing problems; the neighborhood has the highest abandonment rate in Jamaica Plain and the Bromley-Heath project needs substantial rehabilitation and maintenance. The local business district along Centre Street has nearly complete occupancy with a majority of businesses owned or operated by Hispanic merchants; additionally, a large number of stores have rehabilitated their storefronts with the aid of the City's RESTORE program. Neighborhood concerns focus on housing problems, heavy commuter traffic on Lamartine Street, impact of the proposed Orange Line stations and reuse of the vacant parcels in the Southwest Corridor.

### 4. Jamaica Central

The Jamaica Central neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 4,500 people. In 1970, the population was 92% White, 2% Black and 6% Hispanic. The housing stock is mainly two and three family frame dwellings with about 31% of the stock in single family homes. Under the City's Community Improvement Program, many residential units were rehabilitated and needed street improvements completed. However, Jamaica Central still has some housing problems; the blighting presence of land cleared for the Southwest Corridor has threatened residential stability, and it is along the Corridor where the majority of housing in fair to poor condition is located. Neighborhood concerns focus on housing problems, heavy commuter traffic on Lamartine Street, impact of the proposed Orange Line stations and reuse of the vacant parcels in the Southwest Corridor.

## 5. Jamaica Hills

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The Jamaica Hills neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 3,200 people. In 1970, the population was 98% White, 1% Black and 1% Hispanic. The housing stock is predominantly single family homes (about 95%) with about 5% of the stock comprised of two and three family structures. Jamaica Hills is a strong residential neighborhood with Jamaica Plain's lowest abandonment and vacancy rate and its highest family income and owner-occupancy rate. Neighborhood concerns focus on institutional expansion and conversion and the maintenance of the single family character of the neighborhood.

## 6. Jamaica Pond

The Jamaica Pond neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 4,600 people. In 1970, the population was 99% White and less than 1% Black and Hispanic. The Jamaica Pond area also has Jamaica Plain's highest percentage of elderly residents (23.6%), nearly twice the City average. The housing stock is 37% single family structures and 60% two and three family structures. The southern half of the neighborhood has a greater proportion of large, old Victorian homes on large lots while the northern half has a greater proportion of modest two and three family homes on smaller lots. In recent years, the Jamaica Pond area has been under pressure from developers desiring to convert many of its old, large homes to multi-family units; some have been taken over by communes and religious sects and there have also been conversions to nursing homes and student quarters. Additional concern in the neighborhood has been raised by the threat of institutional expansion and conversion.

## 7. Jamaica South

The Jamaica South neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 4,200 people. In 1970, the population was 95% White, 3% Black and 2% Hispanic. The housing stock is mainly two and three family frame structures with about 28% of the stock in single family homes. Under the City's Community Improvement Program, many residential units were rehabilitated and needed street improvements completed. Jamaica South is a strong neighborhood with a low vacancy and abandonment rate. Neighborhood concerns focus on the large parcels of vacant land cleared for the Southwest Corridor and what their ultimate disposition will be.

8. Stoneybrook

The Stoneybrook neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 3,000 people but also contains a large portion of Jamaica Plain's industrial area. In 1970, the population was 89% White, 5% Black and 6% Hispanic. The housing stock is comprised mainly of two and three family frame dwellings, with the triple decker predominating. The neighborhood has serious housing problems; it has the third highest vacancy and abandonment rate in Jamaica Plain and over 30% of the units need fix up over \$1,000. The 312 program was recently made available in the Stoneybrook neighborhood to help meet some of its needs. The Washington Street "El" and sections of the industrial area are a blighting influence on the neighborhood. Neighborhood concerns focus on housing problems, industrial blight, impact of the proposed Orange Line stations and reuse of the vacant land in the Southwest Corridor.

9. Sumner Hill

The Sumner Hill neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 2,400 people. In 1970, the population was 98% White, 1% Black and 1% Hispanic. Sumner Hill also has the second highest percentage of elderly residents (23.5%) in Jamaica Plain. The housing stock is 39% single family structures and 53% two and three family structures. A significant part of the housing stock is old Victorian homes on large lots and Sumner Hill is attracting young families and professionals as replacement buyers. The neighborhood is bounded on one side by the Southwest Corridor and will be impacted by a new Orange Line Station and development of vacant parcels.

Additionally, Sumner Hill faces the problem of finding a suitable reuse for the Jamaica Plain High School when the new SWII High School is completed.

10. Woodbourne

The Woodbourne neighborhood is a residential area of approximately 3,200 people. In 1970, the population was 100% White. The housing stock is primarily single family homes (67%) with 31% in two and three family structures. Woodbourne has the second highest owner occupancy rate (92%) in Jamaica Plain and a low vacancy rate. Seventy five units of elderly housing will shortly be built on the vacant land once occupied by the abandoned buildings known as "White City." Neighborhood concerns focus on the poor conditions at Pagel Playground and on the reuse of vacant parcels in the Southwest Corridor.

COMPARATIVE STATISTICS

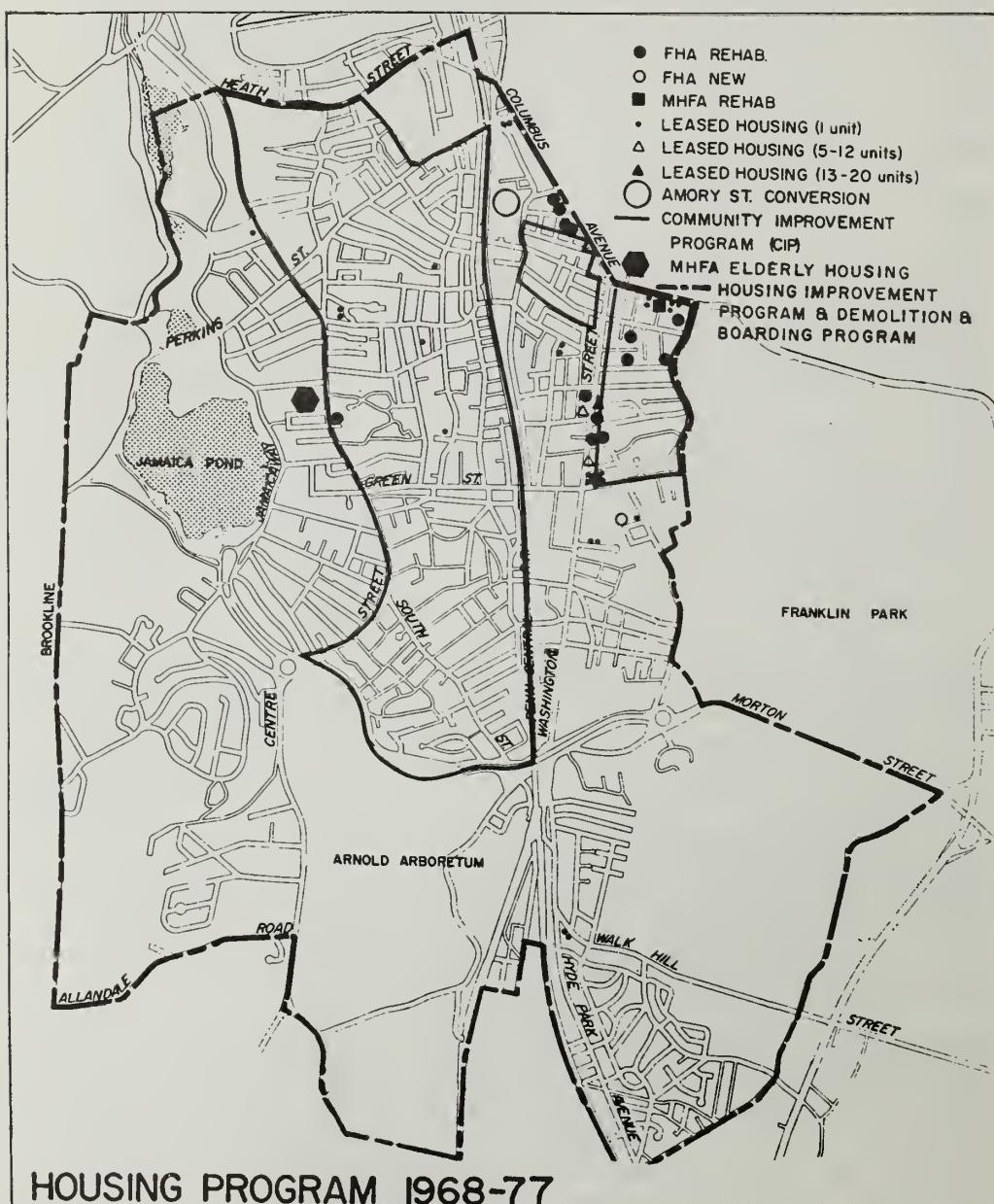
	Total Pop. 1970	Black Pop. 1970	Spanish Pop. 1970	65 & Over 1970	Total Resid. Struct. 1970	Owner Occ. Struct. 1970	Median Family Income 1970	% Families Below Poverty Level 1970
Egleston Square	7,085	1,087 (15.3%)	1,016 (14.3%)	1,172 (16.5%)	860	566 (65.8%)	\$ 7,250	14.5
Forest Hills	2,811	2 ( 0.0%)	46 ( 1.6%)	347 (12.3%)	332	245 (73.8%)	\$ 9,000	12.5
Hyde Square	10,563	3,078 (29.1%)	1,417 (13.4%)	1,056 (10.0%)	1,076	635 (59.0%)	\$ 7,200	22.0
Jamaica Central	4,516	92 ( 2.0%)	266 ( 5.9%)	855 (18.9%)	607	428 (70.5%)	\$ 9,600	10.0
Jamaica Hills	3,245	24 ( 0.7%)	15 ( 0.5%)	463 (14.3%)	720	704 (97.8%)	\$12,700	2.0
Jamaica Pond	4,550	15 ( 0.3%)	21 ( 0.5%)	1,075 (23.6%)	591	486 (82.2%)	\$11,000	6.0
Jamaica South	4,187	110 ( 2.6%)	70 ( 1.7%)	648 (15.5%)	555	387 (69.7%)	\$ 9,000	10.0
Stoney-brook	3,003	157 ( 5.2%)	183 ( 6.1%)	350 (11.7%)	306	177 (57.8%)	\$ 8,550	12.0
Sumner Hill	2,377	18 ( 0.8%)	28 ( 1.2%)	558 (23.5%)	335	226 (67.5%)	\$ 9,700	10.0
Wood-bourne	3,188	0 ( 0.0%)	0 ( 0.0%)	469 (14.7%)	587	540 (92.0%)	\$10,500	8.5
District	45,525	4,583 (10.1%)	3,062 ( 6.7%)	6,993 (15.4%)	5,969	4,394 (73.6%)	-	-
City	641,071	104,206 (16.3%)	17,984 ( 2.8%)	81,718 (12.7%)	80,700	58,100 ( 72.0%)	\$ 9,133	

C. PAST MAJOR PUBLIC INVESTMENT (1968-1977)

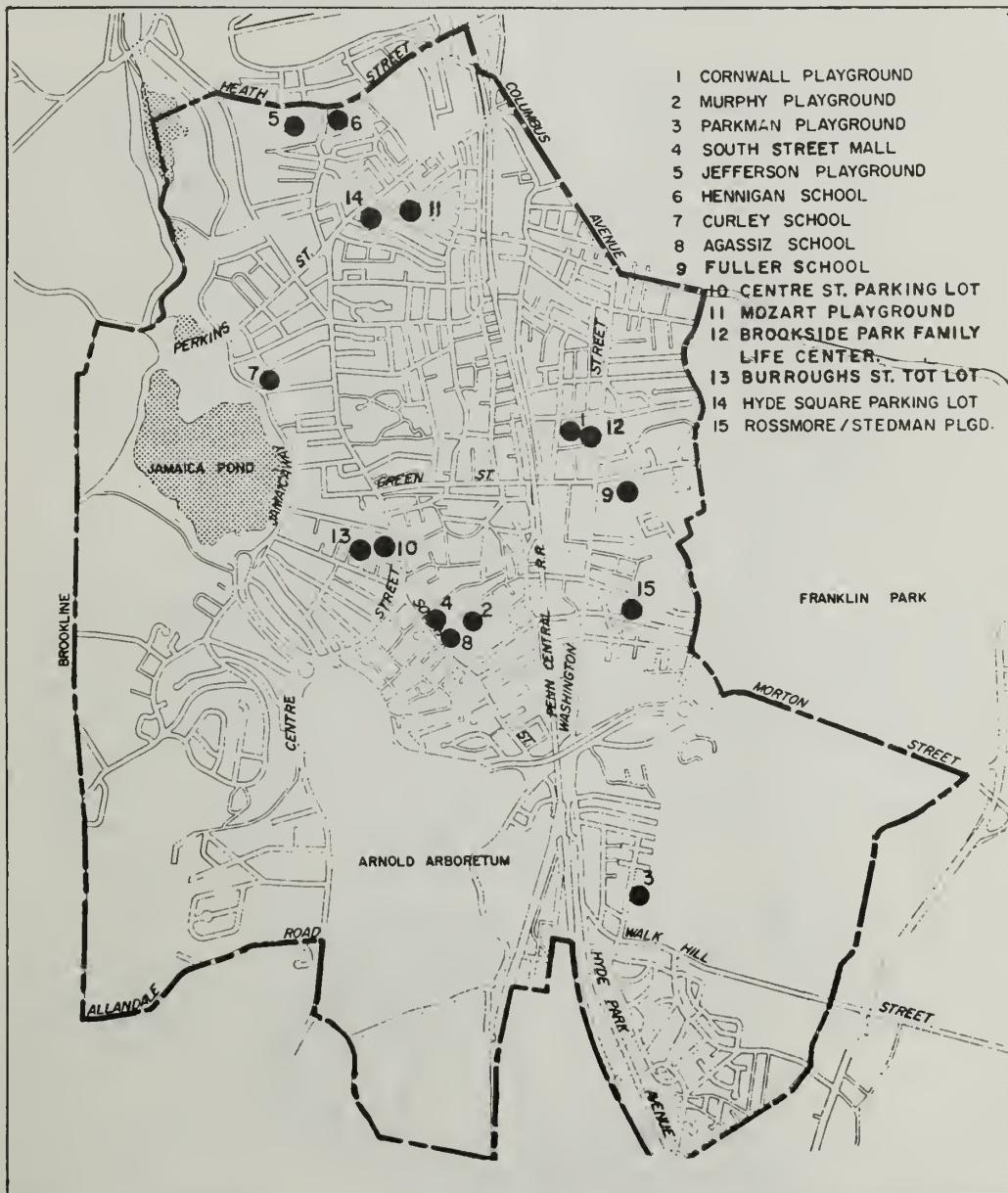
Capital expenditures in Jamaica Plain increased substantially from 1968 to 1977 as compared to previous periods. From 1968 to 1977 over \$23,000,000 was expended. The major thrust of capital investment has been toward strengthening neighborhoods through the construction or renovation of community facilities, parks and streets. The City spent over \$16 million for the construction of three new schools and over \$850,000 for the renovation of playground facilities (see Public Facilities map). At the same time, there were over 6 miles of street reconstruction, over a mile of sidewalk reconstruction and over three miles of sewer and water work completed (see Public Works map).

Public effort in housing has been directed in four areas of activity: new construction, conservation, leased housing, rehabilitation. 147 units of newly constructed MHFA elderly housing were completed at 545 Centre Street. The old Holtzer-Cabot factory building on Amory Street was converted by the Boston Housing Authority to 233 units of low income elderly housing, demonstra-

ting the ability to reclaim industrial property for residential use. Under the leased housing program, the Boston Housing Authority has been able to provide low and moderate income families and individuals with attractive housing. Many residential units were rehabilitated under FHA programs and the MHFA completed a superior rehabilitation project at Cleaves Court. Since its inception, the Housing Improvement Program has encouraged the private rehabilitation of over 640 homes in the district. This program has been instrumental in the preservation of Jamaica Plain's housing stock by offering cash rebates to homeowners who complete certain home improvements. Recently, a 40% HIP program was introduced

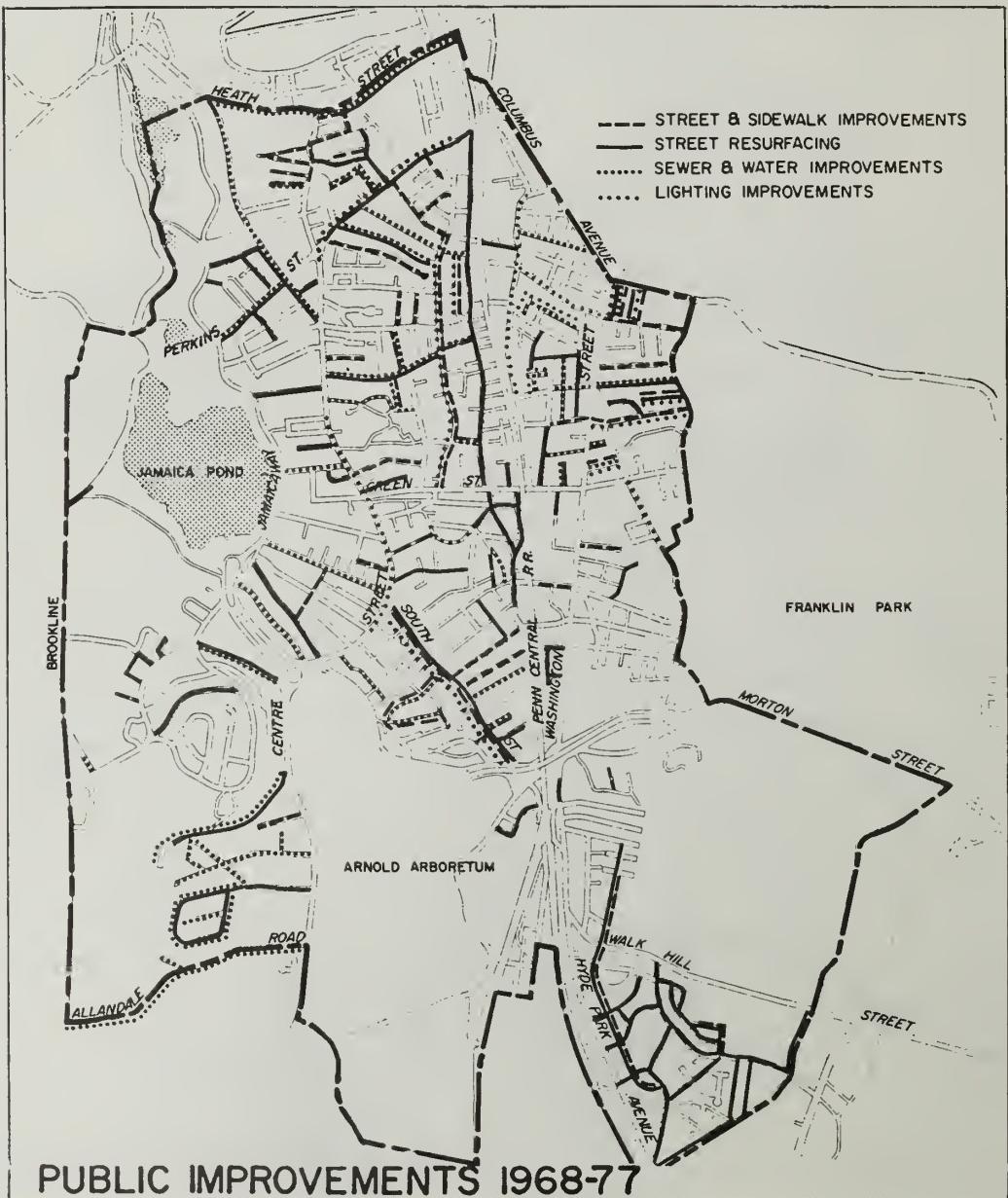


in sections of Jamaica Plain to provide a 40% rebate for replacement of defective systems or repair of major structural defects. The 312 program (which provides 3% loans for home repairs) was made available in sections of Jamaica Plain which were not included in the program in the past. Rehabilitation of abandoned houses for sale to owner-occupants was started under a 1975 program administered by Urban Edge and is expected to continue for at least three years. The program, jointly funded by the Federal Urban Reinvestment Task Force and the City, provides a revolving loan fund for renovation and a subsidy pool for properties where the highest bid by a prospective buyer is less than the total cost of acquisition and renovation (see Housing Programs map).



#### D. 1977 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The 1977 Neighborhood Improvement Program (see map) focuses on four main areas: housing, neighborhood business districts, capital improvements and human services. Particular emphasis is placed on the preservation and rehabilitation of the housing stock with special attention to the elderly. The Housing Improvement Program is funded at \$175,000 and, supplemented by the unused funds from 1976, will allow approximately 400 homeowners to participate. A 50% rebate will be available to elderly homeowners. Additionally, part of the Egleston Square area (as well as the previous Hyde Square area) will be eligible for the 40% HIP program which provides a 40% rebate for replacement of defective systems or repair



of major structural defects. The neighborhood's public housing projects will receive needed funding: roof repairs will be made at the Pond Street elderly housing, special work crews will rehab vacant apartments at Bromley-Heath and a fifty-fifty share between the City and the tenants will continue the Bromley-Heath security patrol. Funds are also budgeted for demolition or boarding of abandoned buildings.

Public investments in Jamaica Plain's business districts in previous years will be reinforced in 1977 with the continuation of footpatrols in Hyde Square, Egleston Square, Forest Hills and along Centre Street and construction of a new parking lot in Egleston Square.

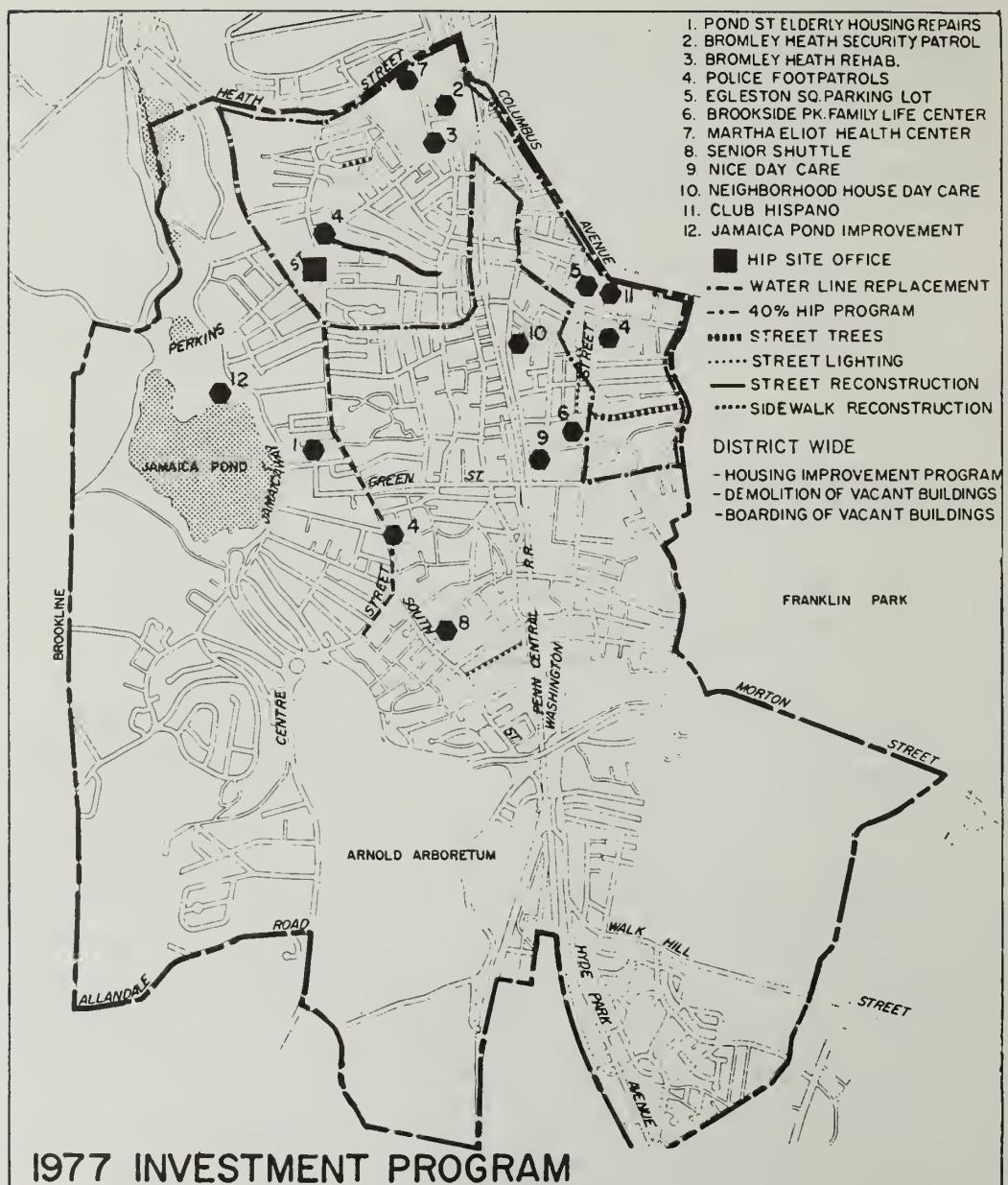
The City's major project in Jamaica Plain is the complete reconstruction of Centre Street from the Monument to South Huntington Avenue. Total expenditures for the project will be approximately \$1,300,000; \$500,000 will be expended from the City's Chapter 90 funds for reconstruction of the street, portions of the sidewalks and provision of new lighting, \$300,000 will be expended from the City's capital budget to provide new water lines under Centre Street and \$500,000 will be expended by the MBTA for reconstruction of the Arborway Line tracks.

Capital improvements will provide new street lighting along Haverford Street, reconstruction of Forbes Street, sidewalk reconstruction on Edgehill and Boynton Streets and street trees along Peter Parley Road.

Preliminary approval of the following Round II Public Works Bill projects has been received and implementation is expected during this fiscal year: street reconstruction for Greenley Place, May Street, Perkins Street, Pond Street, Wyman Street and Spring Park Avenue; sidewalk reconstruction on Burroughs Street, Moraine Street, Orchard Hill Street, Kenton Road, Rodman Street, Bournedale Street and portions of Hyde Park Avenue, Cornwall Street and St. Joseph Street; street lighting along School Street from Amory to Mendell Way; reconstruction of the tot lot at Jefferson Playground; repairs to the Ellis Mendell School; and water line improvements on Weld Street, Wenham Street, Sunset Avenue, Hillside Avenue and Craft Place.

Provision of human services focuses on continued funding of established programs at Brookside and Martha Eliot Health Centers, NICE Day Care Center and Club Hispano. The elderly van will be continued and a day care program at the Neighborhood House will be funded.

A major federal grant to the MBTA of over \$300,000,000 is expected this year for design, engineering and construction of the Southwest Corridor project.



## **2. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES/RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES (Mid and Long-Range)**

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### **A. RESIDENTIAL DISINVESTMENT**

#### **Issue**

Jamaica Plain has traditionally been a family residential area with strong neighborhood ties. At present, however, there are many complex and inter-related factors which, in various combinations, contribute to the deterioration of the housing stock and threaten the stability of some residential neighborhoods. These areas have experienced a process in which owners have suffered a loss of confidence and have reduced ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation expenditures so that a significant deterioration in the quality of the housing stock has occurred.

Some of the factors which contribute to this residential disinvestment are:

1. **Income Cost Squeeze:** Operating costs often go up faster than income and, in combination with high taxes and modest rents, restrict the funds available for maintenance or fix-up.
2. **Restrictions On Availability Of Mortgages and Home Improvement Loans:** In portions of Jamaica Plain, it has been difficult for some homeowners or potential buyers to obtain a mortgage or home improvement loan. When loans are made, they may involve higher interest rates, higher down payments and shorter maturities than those made in suburban areas. Concerns are also being raised about the difficulty of obtaining homeowner's insurance or the need to pay higher premiums or being assigned to a high-risk pool.
3. **Absentee Landlords:** In general, absentee-owned structures in Jamaica Plain are in worse condition than owner-occupied structures in the same neighborhood. Many factors make absentee-owned structures particularly susceptible to disinvestment and a concentration of absentee-owned buildings provides the opportunity for an acceleration of the deterioration of the housing stock.
4. **Fear Of Crime and Social Change:** Fear of crime is a major factor which has kept families from moving into or encouraged families to move out of sections of Jamaica Plain. Social and racial changes have occurred in some sections of Jamaica Plain and the myths associated with socio-economic and racial change spur many middle class families to leave the area. Typically, they go through a process of disinvestment well in advance of the new renters/owners and the new groups inherit a housing stock which often is too costly for them to adequately maintain.

5. Presence Of Blighting Influences: The presence of blighting influences such as the Washington Street "EL," abandoned housing, dirty vacant lots, deteriorated public housing, objectionable industrial areas and the cleared tracts of land in the Southwest Corridor often discourage investment and lead to further decline in quality of the district. Abandonment is a particularly important issue in Jamaica Plain. Often, abandoned buildings are not boarded or demolished quickly enough and tax delinquent properties are not obtained as rapidly as they should be.

### Strategies

The strategy to combat residential disinvestment must rest to a great extent upon the participation and the attitudes of the area's residents; rehabilitation incentives, capital improvements, etc., can only play a minimal role unless the neighborhood residents are actively involved and generally perceive that conditions are going to get better. The presence or establishment of a neighborhood association is an important factor in maintaining positive attitudes and in creating a mechanism whereby the neighborhood can gain a greater degree of control over its own destiny. It is generally acknowledged that if a significant proportion of the neighborhood's residents make a commitment to try and improve the neighborhood, that other residents not initially involved become involved and make greater efforts. Some of the steps that can be taken to reverse residential disinvestment by increasing neighborhood participation, improving the physical quality of the neighborhood and attracting more families and owner occupants are:

1. Ensure Credit Availability: Lending institutions must be encouraged to provide mortgages and home improvement loans to families throughout Jamaica Plain and the City and community groups should work in concert to ensure this. The requirement by the State Banking Commissioner for disclosure by banks of sources of deposits and mortgage lending patterns, the establishment and working of the Mortgage Review Board and the greenlining effort by the Jamaica Plain Banking and Mortgage Committee all provide opportunities to increase the general availability of credit throughout Jamaica Plain and should be supported and continued. The City should continue its positive public relations effort and work with bankers, realtors, appraisers, etc., to make them aware of Jamaica Plain's attributes.
2. Provide Rehabilitation Incentives: Continuation of the Housing Improvement Program (consisting of counseling, technical assistance and a 20% cash rebate to owner occupants of 1-6 family structures who complete certain housing improvements) will provide the needed incentive to the major portion of Jamaica Plain. An analysis of the 20% program should be undertaken to determine if major modifications are needed. Continue the 40% HIP program; this program is designed to provide a 40% rebate for replacement of defective

systems (i.e., heating and electrical) and repair of major structural defects as a supplement to the 20% rebate for other repair work. The 40% program is designed to restore structures in deteriorated neighborhoods that would not otherwise be repaired with a 20% rebate, encourage major repairs that often precede or sometimes cause residential abandonment and provide a greater leverage of conventional financing. The need to expand the 40% program to other areas of Jamaica Plain should be studied and the area coverage expanded if necessary. Continue the 50% HIP program; this program provides a 50% rebate to elderly homeowners who complete certain housing improvements. The need for a deep rehab incentive program for individuals to encourage rehabilitation of abandoned buildings should be studied and a program initiated if necessary.

Utilization of rental subsidies under the Federal Section 8 Leased Housing Program or the State 707 Leased Housing Program could provide incentives for owners to rehabilitate their housing. Section 8 and 707 provide subsidies to owners renting apartments (that conform to certain housing code standards) to low and moderate income tenants; this subsidy provides a rent line high enough to assure an adequate cash flow to cover the cost of rehabilitation and permit adequate maintenance. Funds available under these programs, however, are very limited and, at present, can play only a minor role in the neighborhood's total rehabilitation needs.

3. Emphasize Neighborhood Improvement: Enforcement of occupancy regulations, code enforcement for problem absentee-owned structures, securing or clearance of abandoned buildings, restoration and improvement of vacant lots, transfer of certain City owned vacant lots to the BRA Open Space Management Program and renovation and modernization of the public housing projects at Bromley/Heath and South Street will help to upgrade residential neighborhoods and generate confidence in the future of Jamaica Plain.
4. Provide New Capital Investment: Reconstruction of streets and sidewalks, repair and replacement of sewer and water systems, improvement of street lighting and capital investment in parks, schools and other public facilities demonstrate continued confidence by the City and, when coupled with other preservation and revitalization programs, can have a significant positive impact on an area. Because of the City's limited bonding capacity, all near-term capital investments will, of necessity, have to be limited and should be allocated to high priority needs. Maintenance of parks and playgrounds, especially Franklin Park, should be improved and more frequent police patrols after dark could be utilized to eliminate some of the vandalism that occurs. One way to improve park maintenance may be to place that responsibility on the neighborhood; a pilot program should be established whereby the Parks Department contracts with a recognized community

group to provide maintenance for a park or playground which is presently in poor condition. This should increase community involvement with the facility, result in improved maintenance and provide additional jobs for community residents.

5. Encourage New Private Investment: The construction of new housing is a vital component in providing for the needs of the district. Many sites in the Southwest Corridor, as well as parcels in the Jamaica Hills/Jamaica Pond Area, are well suited for low-rise housing. New residential developments can have a significant stabilizing influence on the neighborhood and help to improve the image of Jamaica Plain as a good investment area and a good neighborhood in which to live. The Adams-Nervine property, which was recently designated as a Landmark by the Boston Landmarks Commission, presents a unique opportunity for conversion to residential use.
6. Continue and Improve Public Relations Efforts: The publication of a Jamaica Plain poster and the airing of a prime time television show on Jamaica Plain helped to promote pride and confidence on the part of current residents and encouraged new families to seek housing in Jamaica Plain. The City should continue with a positive public relations campaign about Jamaica Plain and publish new brochures, etc., highlighting the unique attributes and positive accomplishments in the community. Jamaica Plain businessmen, institutions and similar organizations should also be encouraged to undertake positive promotional efforts.
7. Encourage Historic Preservation: Jamaica Plain has several outstanding examples of historic structures (the Loring Greenough House, Eliot School, etc.) which have been clearly recognized, but many potentially significant structures and districts have not been identified or protected. The City and community groups should work closely to identify these structures and develop a realistic program to preserve their distinct qualities. The City of Boston Landmarks Commission should prove helpful in this undertaking; they have recently designated the Adams-Nervine property on Centre Street and have submitted an application to place the Monument Square district on the National Register of Historic Places.

## B. COMMERCIAL CENTER DECLINE

### Issue

The decline of neighborhood shopping centers in Jamaica Plain is not unusual in the era of "one stop" shopping at large outlying chain stores. The convenience of ample free parking at chain stores and variety of merchandise available in regional shopping centers make these facilities more attractive to those with automobiles. With a loss of clientele to outlying stores, the neighborhood store operator is often faced with diminishing sales and increasing

costs. A typical response has been to reduce costs at the expense of service and quality, thereby decreasing the attractiveness of the merchandise to the remaining customers and setting into motion a cycle of decline. However, the need for neighborhood shopping areas, especially for the elderly or those without automobiles, requires that neighborhood commercial centers be upgraded and a balance of stores be provided offering the basic goods and services.

Although the district's commercial centers have low vacancy rates, a central issue is how to make the neighborhood shopping centers more competitive with outlying stores so that residents will utilize the shops and services close at hand.

### Strategy

Both public and private efforts are required to enable neighborhood shopping centers to compete with larger suburban centers. Significant City investments, including the recent \$1,300,000 reconstruction project along Centre Street, have been made in Jamaica Plain's commercial centers but a greater effort on the part of the businessmen is needed to continue to improve the centers. Additional street furniture will help to create a more attractive and convenient shopping environment on Centre Street and in Egleston Square, Hyde Square and Forest Hills. Continuation of police foot patrols is a major factor in the commercial center's image and will discourage vandalism and theft and encourage shoppers to use neighborhood facilities. The City should assist businessmen's associations in setting up workshops, conducting market studies, assessing current mixes of stores, attracting new businesses and providing for the reuse of key parcels. Commercial development at the station locations along the new Orange Line should be geared towards complementing the existing commercial centers and not towards competing with existing major uses. These public actions and improvements, in concert with the storefront improvement program, conformance to the City's sign code and accelerated private investment should provide for a significant upgrading of Jamaica Plain's neighborhood commercial centers.

## C. TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

### Issue

Transportation problems in Jamaica Plain center around 3 major issues: street network deficiencies, traffic congestion and public transportation. Heavy traffic and deferred maintenance have left many of Jamaica Plain's major roadways in poor condition. Congestion is present on major through routes, especially during rush hours, and is intensified by illegal parking and insufficient traffic control. Continuation and improvement of the MBTA's Arborway streetcar service and the design and impact of the proposed Arborway Bus Garage are issues of importance in the area of public transportation. However, the central public transportation issue in Jamaica Plain is development of the Southwest Corridor and the new stations at Forest Hills, Green Street, Boylston Street

and Jackson Square; issues of concern in the Corridor are: station layout, traffic routing and parking around the stations, commercial development at and around the stations, bus traffic to the stations, relief for Amory and Lamartine Streets and development of vacant land in and around the Corridor.

### Strategy

The physical condition of some streets requires resurfacing or reconstruction and provision of new street lighting. The problem of traffic speed and congestion, particularly in the Southwest Corridor, requires a multi-faceted approach. A study of the existing circulation plan is needed and the function of certain overutilized or congested streets, most notably Amory and Lamartine Streets, should be reviewed and alternative circulation proposals developed and implemented. Traffic signalization is necessary on some major streets as well as troublesome intersections on secondary roads. Stepped-up ticketing and towing of illegally parked cars, especially double parkers, is a necessary step in the resolution of Jamaica Plain's traffic congestion, especially on Centre and Washington Streets.

The City should work with the MBTA and the community to facilitate changes that would improve service on the Arborway Line. Redesign of the Arborway Bus Garage plans must be accomplished to ensure its compatibility with the surrounding community and areawide planning considerations. The City and community groups also must review and monitor all Southwest Corridor construction plans, station layouts, the proposal for a 500 car parking garage at Forest Hills, and proposals for new development to ensure their compatibility with the community. Portions of the Southwest Corridor are zoned such that they allow uses which are inappropriate in those areas. Proposals for rezoning and new development controls should be prepared and adopted.

## D. INSTITUTIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION/ENCROACHMENT

### Issue

The Egleston Square/Stoneybrook area contains the majority of the industrial land in Jamaica Plain but it is not efficiently used and the industrial area is deteriorating because of obsolescence brought about by changing technology and poor access. An issue of increasing importance to the City is how to ensure viability of industrial firms and attract new light industry and jobs without adversely affecting the quality of life in adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Institutional expansion and encroachment is an issue of importance in Jamaica Plain, especially in the Jamaica Pond/ Jamaica Hills area where institutions have continued to expand and locate in a haphazard pattern by means of individual variances and conversion of residential properties.

A study of the industrial areas in Jamaica Plain should be prepared and proposals for rezoning (if applicable) set forth, which, if adopted, should encourage intensified industrial activity within designated zones. Transportation improvements to provide better access and private modernization efforts would contribute to the viability of the existing industrial firms and help to attract new firms. A study of institutional locations, needs and problems should be prepared so it can be utilized as a guide to action in determining appropriate locations or expansion needs of institutions and in granting or denying individual variances. Additionally, because of the unfair burden placed on the Boston taxpayer because of the large percentage of tax exempt property, the City should no longer allow removal of any further property from the tax rolls by tax exempt institutions unless an agreement is reached concerning payments in lieu of taxes to the City.

### **3. PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (1978-1980)**

The proposed 1978-1980 Neighborhood Improvement Program for Jamaica Plain is designed to strengthen neighborhood confidence by reinforcing community strengths and improving conditions in declining areas. During the next three years, this program must address Jamaica Plain's major issues of residential disinvestment, commercial center decline, transportation problems and provision of human services.

In preparing recommendations for this proposed program, the fiscal constraints under which Boston operates were taken into account. The City faces serious fiscal problems due to cutbacks in federal and state aid, the inequitable tax structure in Massachusetts, an excessive reliance upon the property tax, limited and high cost bonding capacity and rapidly escalating construction and personnel costs. Due to these problems and the scarcity of available funds, the City must continue to use a variety of resources to implement neighborhood preservation and revitalization efforts and must maximize the use of public investment to leverage private investment. Since Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds are designated primarily for low and moderate income areas and Public Works Bill and Capital budget funds have no such restriction on their use, there should be a general policy for allocation of funds among areas. In general, needs in areas with median incomes below the City median should be met primarily with CDBG funds and needs in areas with a median income above the City median should be met with Public Works Bill and capital budget funds. Additionally, since needs are generally greater in lower and moderate income areas, allocation of funds to these areas from the Public Works Bill and capital budget as a supplement to CDBG funds will probably be necessary.

The proposed program for Jamaica Plain is as follows:

A. RESIDENTIAL DISINVESTMENT

The Housing Improvement Program has been an important and integral part of Jamaica Plain's housing program and has been quite effective in encouraging homeowners to make needed repairs. Over 400 structures have been or are being rehabilitated under this program. The 20% and 50% HIP programs should be continued, modified where necessary and funding should be made available for approximately 750 structures over the next three years. The need to extend the 40% HIP program now available in the Hyde Square and Egleston Square neighborhoods, to other sections of Jamaica Plain which need the additional inducement offered by this program should be studied and the program made available where necessary. Funding should be made available for approximately 600 structures over the next three years. Because of Jamaica Plain's large Spanish-speaking population, the City should evaluate the need for programs to overcome language and cultural barriers which may inhibit participation of the Spanish population in housing programs and should initiate programs to overcome those barriers.

The demolition and boarding program should be continued. Funds for boarding approximately 40 structures and demolishing approximately 45 hazardous structures should be made available over the next three years. To more effectively maintain and manage large and/or important City-owned vacant lots, these lots should be transferred to the BRA Open Space Management Program and the necessary funds allocated.

The public housing projects at Bromley/Heath and South Street are in need of extensive renovations. The BHA must accelerate its maintenance program at these two projects. Funds must be obtained and allocated over the next three years to continue major renovations and improve recreational facilities at the Bromley/Heath project and accomplish needed renovations at the South Street project.

The reconstruction of residential streets and sidewalks, the installation of street lights and street trees and the cleaning and replacement of sewer and water lines play an important part in maintaining neighborhood confidence and in leveraging private investment. An inventory of existing conditions and specific needs on all Jamaica Plain streets should be completed and a phasing plan for improvements developed and implemented. At least \$1,000,000 should be allocated over the next three years to continue the construction and repair of Jamaica Plain's public works facilities on a systematic basis. More specifically, funds should be allocated for the reconstruction of South Huntington Avenue in conjunction with improvements to the trolley tracks by the MBTA.

Recreation facilities in Jamaica Plain are heavily utilized and need to be regularly maintained and repaired. The City should also monitor demographic changes and update its facilities accordingly to address developing or changing needs.

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Many major public facilities in Jamaica Plain such as schools, fire stations, libraries, etc., are old and deteriorating. A thorough evaluation of their useful life, need for replacement and reuse potential should be undertaken in the immediate future. Programs for new construction or renovation should be reflective of these findings and funding allocated for 1979-1980. Purchase of the parking lot at Child and South Streets was a neighborhood priority which was not funded in 1977 and should be funded in the 1978 budget. This lot, owned by St. Thomas' Church and excess to their needs, provides parking for the teachers, administrators and other employees at the Agassiz School, for those who participate in the evening programs at this community school and for people who attend the numerous community meetings which are held at the Agassiz School. Reconstruction and landscaping of this lot should be funded in the 1979 budget.

The airing of a prime time TV show on Jamaica Plain and the publication of a Jamaica Plain poster helped to promote pride and confidence on the part of current residents and encouraged new families to seek housing in Jamaica Plain. To maintain public awareness of Jamaica Plain as a good place to live, shop and raise a family, the City should continue its positive public relations efforts (especially with banks, realtors and other key actors) and funds should be allocated for this effort in 1978-1980. Jamaica Plain businessmen, institutions and other organizations should be encouraged to undertake positive promotional efforts; the need to establish a program to leverage private funds for this effort should be studied and funds allocated in 1979-1980 if necessary.

#### B. COMMERCIAL CENTER DECLINE

Recent public expenditures for footpatrolmen, lighting, parking lots, amenities and storefront rehabilitation have done much to upgrade Jamaica Plain's commercial centers. The footpatrol program has been quite successful and should be funded for 1978-1980. Funds should be allocated in 1978-1980 for additional amenities for Jamaica Plain's commercial centers and be placed in cooperation with local merchants. Local merchants have expressed an interest in studying the need for and the feasibility of providing an additional parking lot for Centre Street. The potential for reuse of key parcels (such as the Old Agassiz site, the Gino's lot on Centre Street, the Big Bear, and the Theater complex in Egleston Square) should be studied and funds for acquisition, demolition, site preparation, etc., allocated in 1979-1980 if necessary. Market studies in the district's centers should be continued.

### C. TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS

A study of street direction changes, intersectional improvements, and traffic signalization to discourage through commuter traffic on residential streets (especially in the Southwest Corridor area) should be undertaken and funding for the necessary physical improvements should be allocated in 1978-1979. A study focusing on Amory and Lamartine Streets is currently underway. Continuous monitoring and review of all Southwest Corridor engineering studies, station layout details and development proposals is necessary; intensive work will begin in late 1977 and continue for the life of the project.

### D. HUMAN SERVICES

Since the Community Development program is primarily a housing and physical development program, only those human service programs for which there is a clear and compelling need and significant community support should be funded from the CD budget. The areas of health care, day care, and youth and elderly services should be thoroughly evaluated by the City with respect to the effective provision of services and the changing needs of Jamaica Plain. Programs and funding levels should be reflective of these guidelines and evaluation so that the provision of key services will effectively respond to the needs of the residents of Jamaica Plain and contribute to neighborhood stability.

#### BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Robert L. Farrell, Chairman

Joseph J. Walsh, Vice Chairman

James G. Colbert, Treasurer

James K. Flaherty, Assistant Treasurer

James E. Cofield, Jr., Member

Kane Simonian, Secretary

Robert F. Walsh, Director

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Roy Bishop, Director, Neighborhood Planning Program

Ronald Nayler, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Planner

ISSUE	STRATEGY	1977 INVESTMENT PROGRAM	PROPOSED 1978-1980 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES
I. Residential Disinvestment	A. Restrictions on mortgage and home improvement loans availability	Increase and stabilize neighborhood mortgage and home improvement assistance. Provide rehabilitation incentives	
	B. Presence of blighting influences	Securing or clearance of abandoned buildings  Rehabilitation of abandoned buildings. Restoration and improvement of vacant lots in residential areas. Hold sizeable or important city-owned vacant areas for future sale or development; transfer these lots to BRA under Open Space Management Program.	Clearance of abandoned, unsafe and dangerous buildings - \$75,000 Securing of vacant buildings for future rehabilitation - \$15,000  Provide Section 8 subsidies Restoration/improvement of 75 additional vacant lots.
		Rehabilitation of public housing	Allocate funds for maintenance of lots under Open Space Management Program. Develop long range reuse proposals.
		Code enforcement of problem buildings	Modernization of additional public housing units and overall environment at Bromley Heath and South Street  Provide staff support for code enforcement program.
	C. Need for Capital Improvements	Capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhood.	Street and sidewalk reconstruction; new street lighting; street trees; sewer and water line improvements Coordinate various programs for maximum impact.
	D. Need for new housing	Encourage private development	Renovate District Fire Station New District Police Station  Additional parks and playfields - maintenance and construction
	E. Illegal Occupancy	Continue to enforce action program for resolution of cases.	Purchase and improve parking lot at Child/South Street
	F. Misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the neighborhood	Continue positive public relations efforts	Hellenic College 5 site residential development (private) Southwest Corridor residential development (public/private) Adams/Hervine residential development (private)
		Maintain police footpatrols in commercial centers	Funding for continuation of public relations efforts.
		Improve lighting	Provide funding for continuation of foot-patrolmen
II. Commercial Center Decline		Provide off street parking lots	Off street parking lot in Forest Hills at Hatoff's site
		Reduce traffic congestion	Urban Systems Projects - Forest Hills
		Stimulate/attract new business	Neighborhood Business District Program (NBDP)
		Reuse key parcels (a) Centre St., Old Agassiz, Gino's lot (b) Egleston: Big Bear, theatre complex, city owned lots (c) Forest Hills: Hatoff's Fitzgerald site	Acquisition, demolition, site preparation
		Strengthen businessmen's associations	NBDP
		Develop plans for pedestrian improvements	Centre Street, Hyde Square, Forest Hills
		Encourage storefront rehab	Storefront Improvement program for Centre Street, Egleston Sq., Hyde Sq.
		Market study to direct revitalization efforts	Centre St., Hyde Square, Egleston Sq., Forest Hills
	A. Street network deficiencies	Patch paving and reconstruction	Additional patch paving & reconstruction
		Improve traffic signalization	Additional signal improvements; new signals
III. Transportation Problems		Street lighting improvements	New street lighting; improved street lighting on Jamaicaway (MDC)
	B. Traffic congestion	Provide roadway improvements to relieve congestion	Street direction changes & closing S.W. Corridor study, especially relief on Amory and Lamartine Streets
	C. Continuation of Arborway street car service	Ensure continuation and improvement of Arborway street car service	
	D. Arborway Bus Garage	Ensure compatibility of design with area-wide planning considerations and retention of streetcar service.	
	E. S.W. Corridor Development Plans	Review all engineering studies to ensure compatibility with existing community. Review details of station layout and attendant development. Review all new development.	Prepare feasibility studies for new development. Examine joint development opportunities. Prepare rezoning proposals
IV. Institutional and Industrial expansion/encroachment		Prepare study of institutional/industrial location needs, problems, etc. as a guide to action.	
		Review individual variances requested.	
V. Human Services		Support necessary neighborhood health centers	Brookside Park Family Life Center - \$80,000 Martha Eliot Health Center - \$24,000
		Support necessary day care centers	NICE Day Care - \$50,000 Neighborhood House Day Care - \$10,000
		Support necessary youth programs	Club Hispano - \$25,000
		Support necessary elderly programs	Senior Shuttle - \$16,500
			Coordination of human service programs seeking City Funding.

